United Nations A/72/PV.78

General Assembly

Seventy-second session

Official Records

78th plenary meeting
Wednesday, 7 March 2018, 10 a.m.
New York

President: Mr. Lajčák ..... (Slovakia)

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

In the absence of the President, Mr. Brown (Liberia), Vice-President took the Chair.

Agenda item 140 (*continued*)

Scale of assessments for the apportionment of the expenses of the United Nations

The Acting President: In keeping with established practice, I would like to draw the attention of the General Assembly to documents A/72/713/Add.1, A/72/713/Add.2 and A/72/713/Add.3, in which the Secretary-General informs the President of the General Assembly that since the issuance of the document contained in A/72/713, Dominica, the Dominican Republic, Equatorial Guinea, Grenada, the Marshall Islands and Suriname have made the payments necessary to reduce their arrears below the amount specified in Article 19 of the Charter of the United Nations.

May I take it that the Assembly takes note of the information contained in documents A/72/713/Add.1, A/72/713/Add.2 and A/72/713/Add.3?

It was so decided.

Agenda item 33

The role of diamonds in fuelling conflict

Note verbale from the Permanent Mission of Australia transmitting the report of the Kimberley Process (A/72/775)

Draft resolution (A/72/L.41)

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Australia to introduce draft resolution A/72/L.41.

Ms. Bishop (Australia): It is with pleasure that I am here today on behalf of Australia, in its role as the previous Chair of the Kimberley Process during 2017. The Kimberley Process makes a valuable contribution to the United Nations agenda for international peace and security, development and human rights.

Fifteen years ago, when the Kimberley Process Certification Scheme was established, the global diamond trade looked very different to that of today. Together, the members of the Kimberley Process have achieved most of what we had, at that time, dared to hope. The debate before the Assembly on resolution 57/302, held in 2003 (see A/57/PV.82), inspired real change. Diamonds were being mined in conflict zones, and the proceeds from the sale of those diamonds supported the continuation of those conflicts and insurgencies. At the far end of the supply chain, consumers had little or no way of knowing where the diamonds they were buying had come from — whether or not, in purchasing a particular item of jewelry or fashion apparel, they

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were inadvertently contributing to and sustaining some distant, deadly conflict.

We have cut the flow of diamonds to insurgencies and to rebel groups that would sacrifice peace and development for their own power. We have drained their finances. We have removed or, at the least, greatly reduced that threat to peace and development. By safeguarding the legitimate trade in diamonds, we have improved the livelihoods of those who rely on it to feed and to educate their families. We have raised awareness. According to a 2016 survey, millennials are three times more likely than older generations to avoid diamonds unless they have been responsibly sourced. This is the future of our world, and while it is moving in the right direction, we in turn must do our part to move with it. We must support the standards that future generations seek to uphold.

Last year, during our chairmanship, I urged us all, and I remind us all now, that even after all that we have achieved, we can and should do more in preventing trade in conflict diamonds. For example, we must look at other ways in which the diamond trade can align with and support the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and sustaining peace. We hope to see a market free from human rights abuses and free from forced labour.

The outcomes we have achieved so far are too valuable for the Kimberley Process to be rendered slowly irrelevant, a victim of its success to date. We draw upon the aspirations that we remember from 2003, and we find inspiration from the vision and the values that the Assembly had back then. Draft resolution A/72/L.41, which we have before us today, is the critical link between the excellent work of the Kimberley Process so far and its potential to contribute to the broader agenda of the United Nations in the years to come.

Today, we ask for a system, through the Kimberley Process, based on pragmatic action and targeted reform. Strengthening the purpose and intent of the Kimberley Process, establishing a dedicated secretariat and supporting participation through a multi-donor trust fund will secure a practical, stable system to ensure that the Kimberley Process can live on and bring us ever closer to our aspirations for 2030 and beyond. Our world no longer accepts practices that, 15 years ago, defined the lives of millions. The underpinning ideologies of the United Nations — what we stand for, who we are — are mirrored in our collective vision for the broader role that the Kimberley Process has to offer.

Australia has played a role in preparing this next step and will work with all Member States to build on the important achievements of the Kimberley Process.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the observer of the European Union.

Mr. Parenti (European Union): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union (EU) and its member States.

The European Union (EU) and its member States, which act as a single participant in the Kimberley Process Certification Scheme, congratulate Australia on hosting and leading the Kimberley Process and on its contribution to strengthening it. The EU further appreciates the forums organized by Australia to address broader matters pertinent to the diamond trade.

First, let me welcome India as the current Vice-Chair and as Chair for 2019. Let me also welcome the Republic of Gabon and praise its determination to fulfilling the Kimberley Process requirements to become a Kimberley Process participant. Let me also acknowledge and welcome the setting up, under the Australian chairmanship, of the Ad Hoc Committee on Review and Reform, tasked to review the core Kimberley Process Certification Scheme document and to examine ways to enhance administrative and financial support to the Process.

The EU further congratulates India and Angola, as Chair and Vice Chair, respectively, of the Review and Reform Committee and affirms — in its capacity as a member of the Committee and as the 2018 Kimberley Chair — its readiness to contribute actively and constructively to the very important tasks entrusted to the newly established Committees as part of the periodic review cycle.

The EU is honoured to have been selected as the Chair of the Kimberley Process for 2018. We have been at the forefront of the Kimberley Process from the very start and we will continue to strive for the Kimberley Process to fulfil its role as a unique tool for conflict prevention and a catalyst for good governance and transparency in natural resource management.

Throughout the life of the Kimberley Process, the EU has been actively engaged in its committees and working groups and in advancing the objectives of the

Process itself. It has worked to reinforce the integrity of the Process scheme and to strengthen the peer review system with a view to ensuring that all Process participants meet minimum requirements. We will continue in that endeavour as the Chair of the overall Kimberley Process this year.

Through its 2018 chairmanship, the EU will work to ensure that the Kimberley Process remains fit for purpose in a changing world, addressing contemporary challenges, including challenges due to instability and conflict, and seizing the opportunity to ensure that the Process remains an effective instrument of peace and prosperity. In particular, the EU will promote an open dialogue among the three pillars that make up the Kimberley Process —Governments, industry and civil society — with a view to forging consensus around the reform agenda and to enhancing the effectiveness of the Kimberley Process, both in terms of peacebuilding and conflict prevention, and in terms of promotion of in-country due diligence.

In that regard, a key priority for our 2018 chairmanship will be to strengthen the tripartite relationship and to promote the establishment of multi-stakeholder forums at the national level. The civil society coalition is an essential part of the Kimberley Process, and the EU will work towards ensuring that it is given a prominent and effective space in which to express its views with all actors on a truly inclusive basis.

As the 2018 Chair, the EU will seek to enhance good governance in the diamond sector at different levels through exchanges of best practices and information among producing, manufacturing and trading countries and centres, through close cooperation with international organizations such as the World Customs Organization and INTERPOL, and through the promotion of transparency in reporting and best practice models for information among all participants.

The EU is strongly committed to contributing to the implementation of the Washington Declaration on Integrating Development of Artisanal and Small-Scale Diamond Mining with Kimberley Process Implementation. Human conditions in mining and the prosperity of producing communities are key concerns. The EU will support capacity-building efforts in areas relevant to compliance with Kimberley Process requirements and will assess how the Kimberley Process can best contribute to the implementation of the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals in producing countries to promote economic and social development and prosperity.

The EU would also encourage cooperation on issues of implementation with a regional dimension, including via its work on the regional approach in the Mano River Union, and will explore ways and means to develop a similar approach in other regions of the world, such as the Central African region, in order to address similar compliance challenges and concerns. In that context, the EU welcomes the continuing commitment of the Government of the Central African Republic to working collaboratively with the monitoring team to ensure the traceability of rough diamond shipments from compliant zones, and encourages the Central African Republic to continue implementing enhanced vigilance measures. As a member of the Central African Republic monitoring team, the EU believes that it is important for the integrity of the Kimberley Process that the monitoring recommendations be duly implemented.

The EU looks forward to working with India, as Vice-Chair, with the Kimberley Process working bodies and committees, and with all participants and observers in the year ahead. The year 2018 will be crucial to the Kimberley Process. We look forward to working closely and constructively with all stakeholders in a transparent and inclusive manner towards attaining the shared objective of ensuring that the Kimberley Process can face new challenges strengthened and re-enforced, and that it remains fit for purpose in a changing world.

Ms. Furman (Israel): We would like to extend our sincere gratitude and appreciation to Australia for its chairmanship of the Kimberly Process in 2017. I would also like to extend Israel's welcome to this year's Chair, the European Union, and to the Vice-Chair, India. We look forward to engaging closely with all of them.

More than 80 nations from across the world have come together over the past 15 years to form what we mark today as a great feat of cooperation across the world — the Kimberley Process. What seemed like an unprecedented goal in 2003 has since become reality, thanks to a global commitment matched by consistent global action. With 99.8 per cent of the world's diamonds now being considered conflict-free, we are closer than ever to reaching our goal. Nevertheless, that 0.2 per cent which is still not conflict-free leaves us with much to be desired.

Israel has always been committed to the Kimberly Process. It was the first State to issue a Kimberley certificate and the first to harness technology to aid the process. Israel has mandated that the import of diamonds must be fully computerized, with each and every arriving delivery opened and examined at customs, leaving zero margin for error. It was also among the first nations to look into the leverage blockchain technology in the development and maintenance of regulatory measures aimed at upholding the process. During the summer of 2017, Israel, alongside eight other countries, hosted a review of the process, and we are eagerly looking forward to the report. Israel will also continue to take part in fellow participants' reviews and continue offering consult to countries seeking to build and strengthen their national diamond sector and use cutting edge technology to better ensure a united and updated global front.

The Kimberly Process intertwines with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), as the commitment to the Certification Scheme contributes greatly to achieving the SDGs. The diamond industry provides jobs for almost 40,000 people in sub-Saharan Africa alone. Its revenues help more children than ever to gain access to better education. It also plays a crucial part in the funding of counselling, testing, treatment programmes, clinics and hospices that help tackle the HIV pandemic in sub-Saharan Africa.

Conflict-free diamonds bring the world a step closer to ending poverty, protecting the planet and ensuring prosperity. The greatest achievement of the Kimberley Process lies in our ability as nations to unite for a common goal. It allows us to foster a reality where no one is left behind.

Mr. Ntwaagae (Botswana): Let me at the outset join my colleagues in thanking you, Sir, for convening this important meeting to discuss the role of diamonds in fuelling conflict, breaking the link between the illicit transaction of rough diamonds and armed conflict as a contribution to the prevention and settlement of conflicts. As a founding member of the Kimberley Process Certification Scheme and a diamond-producing country, Botswana finds this topic to be extremely important and pertinent.

Let me take this opportunity to express our sincere appreciation to the delegation of Australia for its very able stewardship of the Kimberley Process during its tenure as Chair in 2017. Under Australia's able leadership, we have had successful intersessional and plenary sessions. Furthermore, we welcome and commend the Chair for presenting the 2017 implementation report on the Kimberley Process and draft resolution A/72/L.41, on the role of diamonds in fuelling conflict.

One of the primary objectives of establishing the Kimberley Process Certification Scheme was to eliminate illicit rough diamonds from the legitimate diamond trade as a way of preventing these illegal transactions from promoting armed conflict, which is a threat to international peace and security. The Kimberley Process is a unique initiative, bringing together stakeholders such as Governments, the diamond industry and civil society in order to stanch the flow of conflict diamonds into the legitimate diamond market.

The tripartite nature of the Kimberley Process continues to be the main source of strength for the Kimberley Process Certification Scheme. In this regard, we have to jealously guard that relationship, which remains one of the best examples of a successful multi-stakeholder partnership. It is worth emphasizing that the effective implementation of Security Council resolution 1459 (2003) has significantly reduced the trade in conflict diamonds, thereby improving the living standards of people in economies such as that of Botswana, which is highly dependent on the diamond trade. We are therefore gratified to note from the 2017 progress report that the Kimberley Process continues to make significant strides in regulating the international trade of rough diamonds and in ensuring that traded diamonds are from legitimate sources.

The report also underscores the urgent need to reform and strengthen the Kimberley Process so that it remains relevant and addresses the emerging challenges of synthetic diamonds and the capacity constraints of some Governments in putting in place regulatory mechanisms. As a diamond-producing country, Botswana remains committed to the ethical utilization, sale and trade of diamonds. For this reason, we are fully committed to safeguarding and promoting the integrity of the diamond industry, which sustains our economy.

To Botswana, diamonds are for development. They account for our socioeconomic accomplishments over the past 50 years since we gained our independence, and for our graduation from being one of the poorest

countries in the world to being an upper-middle-income country. As noted 10 years ago by our former President, His Excellency Mr. Festus Mogae, in his capacity as then Chair of the Kimberly Process,

> "For our people in Botswana, every diamond bought means food on the table, better living conditions, better health care, safe drinking water, more roads and much, much more. It means that we can build new power stations and expand our electricity network in the country. It means at this time, when our future is threatened by the HIV-AIDS pandemic, Botswana can give free antiretroviral drugs to all those in need; provide food, clothing and support for over 60,000 AIDS orphans; and finance programmes to prevent mother-to-child transmission of the virus."

The importance of diamonds to Botswana's development agenda remains paramount. Proceeds from diamond sales contribute to the implementation of our National Development Plan 11 and Vision 2036, as well as the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the African Union Agenda 2063. The proper management of natural resources such as diamonds is crucial to achieving sustainable development and sustainable peace, as our experience demonstrates. Based on its development success, Botswana stands ready to share lessons, experiences and best practices with other producers of diamonds, especially those emerging from conflict situations.

We welcome Gabon to the Kimberley Process Certification Scheme, as its membership contributes to the growth of the Kimberley Process, which is essential to effective implementation, monitoring and compliance. This growth in membership also reaffirms the importance, relevance and contribution of the Kimberley Process to sustainable development and international peace and security. We also welcome the European Union as the incoming Chair of the Kimberley Process for 2018, and assure it of my delegation's support and cooperation during its tenure.

The Kimberley Process Certification Scheme sets minimum standards that regulate diamond trading, which Process members have to adhere to, including by putting in place national legislation and institutions and export, import and internal controls, and by promoting transparency and exchange of statistical data.

In conclusion, I wish to reaffirm Botswana's commitment to the Kimberley Process and its principles and objectives, aimed at eliminating the flow of illicit rough diamonds from legitimate diamond trade.

The Acting President: The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/72/L.41 entitled "The role of diamonds in fuelling conflict: breaking the link between the illicit transaction of rough diamonds and armed conflict as a contribution to prevention and settlement of conflicts".

I now give the floor to the representative of the Secretariat.

Ms. De Miranda (Department for General Assembly and Conference Management): I should like to announce that, since the submission of the draft resolution, and in addition to those delegations listed in the document, the following countries have become sponsors of A/72/L.41: Israel, Italy, Malta, Montenegro, Namibia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Ukraine and Zambia.

The Acting President: May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt draft resolution A/72/L.41?

Draft resolution A/72/L.41 was adopted (resolution 72/267).

The Acting President: May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda item 33?

It was so decided.

Agenda item 115 (*continued*)

Appointments to fill vacancies in subsidiary organs and other appointments

(f) Appointment of members of the Committee on Conferences

Note by the Secretary-General (A/72/107)

The Acting President: Members will recall that, at its 74th and 76th plenary meetings, on 20 and 24 December 2017, respectively, the Assembly took note of the appointments of Botswana, France, Iraq, Nepal and the Russian Federation as members of the Committee on Conferences for a period of three years, beginning on 1 January 2018, and of China for a term beginning on 20 December 2017 and ending on 31 December 2019.

Members will also recall that one seat from the Latin American and Caribbean States remains to be filled for

a term of office beginning on the date of appointment and expiring on 31 December 2020. Members will further recall that one seat from the Latin American and Caribbean States remains to be filled for a term beginning on the date of appointment and expiring on 31 December 2018.

After consultations with the Chair of the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States during the month of December 2017, the President of the General Assembly has appointed Brazil for a term of office beginning today, 7 March 2018, and expiring on 31 December 2020, and Ecuador for a term of office beginning today, 7 March 2018, and expiring on 31 December 2018.

May I take it that the Assembly takes note of these appointments?

It was so decided.

The Acting President: Regarding the one seat from the African States that remains to be filled for a term of office beginning on the date of appointment and expiring on 31 December 2020, the President of the General Assembly urges the Group of African States to submit the candidature for this seat as soon as possible.

The General Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of sub-item (f) of agenda item 115.

The meeting rose at 10.40 a.m.